“Imperial Presidency” is the phrase used by some historians and political scientists to refer to the Presidencies of Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. [Nixon](http://www.answers.com/topic/richard-nixon). The notion that the President is above the law and that what he orders is the law, despite conflicting provisions of the Constitution or laws passed by Congress, is the fundamental tenet of the imperial Presidency.  
  
The characteristics of the imperial Presidency are disregard for certain provisions of the Constitution, particularly regarding the power of the Congress to declare war and appropriate [funds](http://www.answers.com/topic/imperial-presidency); excessive reliance by the President on White House aides, rather than the cabinet secretaries; isolation of the President from members of Congress; secrecy in making decisions and the use of executive privilege to prevent congressional or judicial inquiries; and surveillance of political opponents and the use of “dirty tricks” against them, in effect converting politics from a contest into a form of political warfare in which all means are used to defeat the opposition.  
  
Critics of this theory argue that Presidents before and after [Lyndon Johnson](http://www.answers.com/topic/lyndon-b-johnson) and Richard Nixon—including Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry Truman—also used their war and budget powers expansively. Johnson and Nixon, the critics maintain, were not the only Presidents to suspend execution of certain constitutional provisions or statutes. Secrecy and the claim of executive privilege have been relied on by several Presidents, including [Dwight Eisenhower](http://www.answers.com/topic/dwight-d-eisenhower) and John F. Kennedy. Some observers have argued that Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and [Ronald Reagan](http://www.answers.com/topic/ronald-reagan) provide evidence for an “imperiled” rather than “imperial” Presidency. These men, they say, faced excessive congressional oversight, investigation, criticism, micro-management through legislation, and other congressional checks and balances carried to extremes.

Questions on Presidential Power:

1. Define the “imperial” president.
2. Cite some examples of how the “imperial president” ignores the rule of law or checks and balances.
3. What can the terms of “imperial” presidents create for their successors?